

PINO PETRUZZELLI READS “THE HEART IN THE TIN BOX” by Morena Perdiali - PROLOGUE

Il cuore nella scatola di latta by Morena Pedrini. There was a time when my grandfather's father used to write poems. He would scratch them lightly on the last page of the newspaper, his eyes soaked in light and his fingers moving slowly, calculating the spaces between the stars and then blowing them 1 by 1 on the still-fresh ink. It was said then, as it is said today, that gypsies cannot read, let alone write. So he would write them down, read them to his wife and then throw them into the fire, watch them consume themselves as one consumes a slice of the sun in the evening. And the next morning he would start again. It was his Penelope's web, the broken chest of his pupils. I never read one of them. Maybe I picked them up in pieces on the road and put them inside me. Perhaps. They were embers of light on a fire that never went out. It was a very dark time and he walked with my grandfather in his arms, his bare feet in the snow and his nerves fraying in the frost.

Running away like mad horses. Grandma remembered him saying there was a war. A war of puffs, of barks, of too-shiny stars stuck in the lap of the sky like millions of bayonets. He had filled the case of his violin with rose petals and sprigs of rosemary and every time he stopped, he would open it, play a song, throw in a few petals as a wish for eternal good luck and off he would go again. I know, however, when my grandfather's father started writing poetry. It was one night on that run. He was always repeating it and looking at his feet. He would pinch the corners of his eyes and say no, that it was just a bit of dust, a word he had dropped and never found again. A word in Romanes, Porrajmos, means devouring, devastation. It is the surrender of Samudaripen. “All dead” is a heavy word falling in smoke indicating a forgotten holocaust, that of the Romani peoples who were victims of the Nazi genocide. And in this time, on that night, he met a boy with mint eyes and rice hands. A Romani boy with a violin under his arm and his throat swollen with notes and songs that cannot be sung.

